

Senate Bill 400  
March 22, 2011  
Presented by Dave Risley  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Dave Risley, the Fish and Wildlife Division Administrator of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information on Senate Bill 400.

FWP views this bill as a targeted increase on the nonresident cap and that is why we can neither support nor oppose. There is no right number of nonresidents licenses that we will be able to get a majority of our stakeholders to agree to and much of the discussion on this topic will be very divisive among our constituents. This social debate pits one important hunter group against another important hunter group.

Thirty-five years ago the Montana Legislature capped nonresident deer and elk combination licenses at 17,000. In subsequent years, 7 separate legislative actions increased this number to about 28,000. In this session, we have another 3 bills, including SB400 that could potentially add another 5000+ nonresidents to the mix. I want to emphasize that some of these numbers are soft, because we expect that some of the legislation simply shifts nonresident hunters from one category to another.

The issue of nonresident numbers, competition and crowding is a very sensitive one to our resident hunters. FWP recognizes that nonresidents add over 120 million dollars annually to Montana's economy and account for nearly two-thirds of FWP's budget. As a national hunter recruitment symbol, it doesn't get any better than Montana

If the committee chooses to move SB400, I would recommend that the language be changed from hunters who *indicate their intent to hunt in a wilderness* to be valid only in designated Federal Wilderness Areas, the bill, however, doesn't specifically limit their use to only wilderness areas.

With that Mr. Chairman, I close my testimony.